

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims **1–4** (cancelled)

5. (Withdrawn) The trailer according to claim **2** wherein the pivotal connection is located between the second end of the hitch member and the hitch.

6. (Withdrawn) The trailer according to claim **5** wherein the inflatable apparatus is connected to the elongated hitch member at a point wherein the pivotal connection is located between the inflatable apparatus and the hitch.

Claims **7–9** (cancelled)

10. (Withdrawn) The trailer hitch assembly according to claim **8** wherein the first attachment member is movable in a horizontal direction with respect to the second attachment member in response to movement of the hitch member and the hitch between the first and second positions.

Claims **11–14** (cancelled)

15. (Withdrawn) The trailer hitch assembly according to claim **12** wherein the hitch attachment of the base frame comprises a receptacle and the pivot member includes a bar that is telescopically received within the receptacle to attach the pivot member to the base frame.

Claims **16–17** (cancelled)

18. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim **16** and further comprising locating the first pivotal axis between the air container and the hitch.

19. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim **16** and further comprising collapsing the flexible air container in a horizontal direction in response to movement of the hitch from the elevated to the lowered position.

20. (cancelled)

21. (New) A bumper-pull type trailer hitch operatively attached to a towing vehicle having a front, rear, a transverse direction parallel to a rear axle of the towing vehicle, and a fore-aft direction generally parallel to a travel direction of the towing vehicle, said bumper-pull type trailer hitch adapted to be connected to a trailer, the bumper-pull type trailer hitch comprising:

- two transversely spaced-apart base frame members, both operatively attached to the towing vehicle;

- a bumper-pull type hitch frame, operatively, pivotally attached to the two base frame members such that a rear portion of the hitch frame may move vertically relative to the base frame members; and

- a gas-filled apparatus, disposed under the towing vehicle and operatively attached to at least one of the two base frame members and the hitch frame such that vertical movements of the rear portion of the hitch frame relative to the base frame members result in changes in a pressure of the gas within the gas-filled apparatus.

22. (New) The bumper-pull type trailer hitch of claim **21** wherein the hitch frame comprises:

- a central hitch frame member, elongated in the transverse direction and residing toward the rear of the hitch frame;

- two side hitch frame members, elongated in a fore-aft direction and operatively, rigidly attached near opposite ends of the central hitch frame member from one another;

- two pivots, disposed forward of the central hitch frame member and providing the operative, pivotal attachment of the two side hitch frame members to the two base frame members.

23. (New) The bumper-pull type trailer hitch of claim **21** wherein the gas-filled apparatus comprises an air bag.

24. (New) The bumper-pull type trailer hitch of claim **21** wherein the gas-filled apparatus comprises two air bags, each operatively connected to one base frame member and one side hitch frame member.

25. (New) The bumper-pull type trailer hitch of claim **22** wherein the gas-filled apparatus comprises two air bags, each operatively connected to one base frame member and one side hitch frame member and each disposed, in the fore-aft direction, between the central hitch frame member and the two pivots.

26. (New) The bumper-pull type trailer hitch of claim **21** additionally comprising:

- a shock absorber;
- a first end of the shock absorber;
- a second end of the shock absorber;
- a first pivotal connection, wherein the first end of the shock absorber is operatively, pivotally attached to one of the two base frame members; and
- a second pivotal connection, wherein the second end of the shock absorber is operatively, pivotally attached to the hitch frame and wherein the shock absorber provides damping to the vertical, independent motion of the hitch frame relative to the base frame members.

27. (New) The bumper-pull type trailer hitch of claim **21** wherein the hitch frame comprises:

- a central hitch frame member, elongated in the transverse direction and residing toward the rear of the hitch frame;
- a fore-aft hitch frame member, elongated in a fore-aft direction and operatively, rigidly attached to the central hitch frame member;

a pivot, disposed forward of the central hitch frame member and providing the operative, pivotal attachment of the fore-aft hitch frame member to the two base frame members.

28. (New) The bumper-pull type trailer hitch of claim **27** wherein the gas-filled apparatus comprises an air bag, operatively connected to at least one base frame member and the fore-aft hitch frame member and disposed, in the fore-aft direction, in front of the pivot.

29. (New) A bumper-pull type trailer hitch operatively attached to a towing vehicle having a front, rear, a transverse direction parallel to a rear axle of the towing vehicle, and a fore-aft direction, generally parallel to a travel direction of the towing vehicle, said bumper-pull type trailer hitch adapted to be connected to a trailer, the bumper-pull type trailer hitch comprising:

a bumper-pull type hitch member to which a hitch ball may be operatively attached;

a horizontal, transversely oriented pivot disposed toward a forward end of the hitch member and allowing vertical motion of a rear end of the hitch member;

a first vertical member, operatively rigidly attached to the hitch member such that vertical movements of the hitch member translate to horizontal movements of the first vertical member;

a second vertical member, operatively rigidly attached to the towing vehicle; and

a gas-filled apparatus, disposed horizontally between the first and second vertical members and operatively attached to the first vertical member at a first end of the gas-filled apparatus and operatively attached to the second vertical member at a second end of the gas-filled apparatus such that vertical movements of the rear portion of the hitch frame result in changes in a pressure of the gas within the gas-filled apparatus, thus the vertical movements of the rear portion of the hitch frame of the bumper-pull type trailer hitch are dampened.

30. (New) The bumper-pull type trailer hitch of claim **29** additionally comprising:

a trailer hitch receiver;

an insert disposed in the receiver and extending in a rearward direction from the receiver;

a retainer pin engaged to both the receiver and the insert, said pin to maintain the insert disposed in the receiver;

a horizontal member disposed beneath the receiver, and operatively, rigidly attached to the insert and to which the hitch member is operatively, pivotally attached and to which the second vertical member is operatively, rigidly attached; and

a pivot pin providing the horizontal, transversely disposed pivot between the hitch member and the horizontal member.

31. (New) The bumper-pull type trailer hitch of claim **29** wherein the gas-filled apparatus comprises an air bag.

32. (New) The bumper-pull type trailer hitch of claim **29** wherein the gas-filled apparatus comprises a first gas-filled apparatus, the bumper-pull type trailer hitch additionally comprising at least one additional gas-filled apparatus, said at least one additional gas-filled apparatus disposed horizontally between the first and second vertical members and operatively attached to the first vertical member at a first end of the at least one additional gas-filled apparatus and operatively attached to the second vertical member at a second end of the at least one additional gas-filled apparatus such that vertical movements of the rear portion of the hitch frame result in changes in a pressure of the gas within the at least one additional gas-filled apparatus, thus the vertical movements of the rear portion of the hitch frame of the bumper-pull type trailer hitch are dampened.

33. (New) A method of cushioning vertical forces to a bumper-pull type hitch caused by movements of a trailer relative to a towing vehicle, the trailer and towing vehicle both having a front, a rear, a right side, and a left side, the method comprising:

operatively, rigidly attaching a left side base frame member of the bumper-pull type trailer hitch to the towing vehicle;

operatively, rigidly attaching a right side base frame member of the bumper-pull type trailer hitch to the towing vehicle;

providing a transverse space between the left side base frame member and the right side base frame member;

operatively, pivotally attaching a bumper-pull type hitch frame to the left and right base frame members such that a rear portion of the hitch frame may move vertically relative to the left and right base frame members;

disposing a gas-filled apparatus beneath the towing vehicle;

operatively attaching said gas-filled apparatus to at least one of the left and right base frame members;

operatively attaching said gas-filled apparatus to the hitch frame; and

changing a pressure of the gas inside the gas-filled apparatus due to vertical movements of the rear portion of the hitch frame independently of the left and right base frame members.

34. (New) The method of claim **33** wherein operatively, rigidly attaching a left side base frame member to the towing vehicle comprises operatively, rigidly attaching a left side base frame member to a left side towing vehicle frame member.

35. (New) The method of claim **33** wherein operatively, rigidly attaching a right side base frame member to the towing vehicle comprises operatively, rigidly attaching a right side base frame member to a right side towing vehicle frame member.

36. (New) The method of claim **33** wherein installing a gas-filled apparatus comprises installing an air bag.

37. (New) The method of claim **33** additionally comprising operatively, rigidly attaching a hitch ball to the hitch frame.

38. (New) The method of claim 33 wherein changing a pressure of the gas inside the gas-filled apparatus due to vertical movements of the rear portion of the hitch frame relative to the left and right base frame members comprises:

sealing said gas-filled apparatus such that gas can neither enter or escape the gas-filled apparatus; and

translating the movements of the rear portion of the hitch frame to changes in a volume of the gas-filled apparatus.

39. (New) The method of claim 33 additionally comprising operatively attaching the trailer to the bumper-pull type trailer hitch.

40. (New) A bumper-pull type trailer hitch operatively attached to a towing vehicle having a front, rear, a transverse direction parallel to a rear axle of the towing vehicle, and a fore-aft direction, generally parallel to a travel direction of the towing vehicle, said bumper-pull type trailer hitch adapted to be connected to a trailer, the bumper-pull type trailer hitch comprising:

a bumper-pull type trailer hitch receiver operatively, rigidly attached to the towing vehicle;

an insert disposed in the receiver and extending in a rearward direction from the receiver;

a retainer pin engaged to both the receiver and the insert, said pin to maintain the insert disposed in the receiver;

a lower member disposed beneath the receiver, elongated in the fore-aft direction, and operatively, pivotally attached to the insert;

a hitch member operatively, rigidly attached to the lower member;

a pivot pin providing a horizontal, transversely disposed pivot between the insert and the lower member; and

a gas-filled apparatus, a first end of the gas-filled apparatus operatively attached to the lower member and a second end of the gas-filled apparatus operatively engaged to the trailer hitch receiver, the gas-filled apparatus disposed such that pivotal movements of the lower member relative to the insert result in changes in a volume of the gas-filled apparatus whereby vertical motions of the hitch member are cushioned.

41. (New) The bumper-pull type trailer hitch of claim **40** wherein the gas-filled apparatus comprises a first gas-filled apparatus, the bumper-pull type trailer hitch additionally comprising a second gas-filled apparatus, a first end of the gas-filled apparatus operatively attached to the lower member and a second end of the gas-filled apparatus operatively engaged to the trailer hitch receiver.

42. (New) The bumper-pull type trailer hitch of claim **40** additionally comprising a shock absorber, a first end of the shock absorber operatively pivotally attached to the lower member and a second end of the shock absorber operatively pivotally connected to the second end of the gas-filled apparatus.

43. (New) The bumper-pull type trailer hitch of claim **40** wherein the gas-filled apparatus is disposed in front of the pivot pin.

44. (New) The bumper-pull type trailer hitch of claim **40** wherein the hitch member is disposed rearwardly from the pivot pin.